



I went to a special college called the Harvey Weinstein College of How to Be a Sleazebag.”

-COURTNEY SOLOMON, PRESIDENT OF GENRE-FILM LABEL AFTER DARK PICTURES, SPEAKING ABOUT THE CONTROVERSIAL OUTDOOR-ADVERTISING

CAMPAIGN FOR THE “TORTURE-PORN” FILM “CAPTIVITY.”

ADS GARFIELD LOVED

BY BOB GARFIELD
bgarfield@adage.com

DOVE

Ogilvy & Mather, Toronto.



“Evolution,” the Cannes Grand Prix-winning viral about the perversion of beauty standards, was a tough act to follow. So, naturally, the follow-up is even better. “Onslaught”—which dramatizes the endless, irresistible barrage of unrealistic “beauty” images—is not quite so riveting as “Evolution” but it’s more explicitly indicting of the culture, including advertising itself.

JC PENNEY

Saatchi & Saatchi, New York



Kevin Roberts’ “Lovemarks” sounds suspiciously like the branding of generic ad emotion. Nonetheless, consider us marked. The lovely spot “Calendar” casts a magical spell that makes you go all gooey about the third-best department store in the mall—a spell broken only by actually entering a JC Penney.

WAL-MART

Martin Agency, Richmond, Va.



The acting and direction aren’t much, and the heavy-handed placement of logos is obnoxious, but the strategy of putting a concrete valuation—a Florida vacation, for example—on aggregate savings is simply brilliant. Save by spending—then spend the savings. Why, it’s so ... American.

WENDY'S

Saatchi & Saatchi, New York



The ridiculous red “Wendy” wig as a symbol consumer defiance, of accepting nothing less than cooked-to-order. Sadly, so far, the executions have been utterly uninspired. But all but a few of Dave Thomas’s hundreds of scripts were too. No problem. This is a Big Idea.

H&R BLOCK

Campbell Mithun, Minneapolis



What was 2007—the Year of Insights? This one was probably the best. “I got people” actually invested the mundane (and often completely unnecessary) act of consulting with a strip-mall tax preparer with the prestige attached to having an entourage or network of highly placed connections. It makes Joe 1040-EZ feel like a play-uh. The poor schmuck.

SONIC

Barkley, Kansas City, Mo.



Thanks to DirectTV, we finally discovered this 4-year-old campaign featuring various pairs of improv comics at the Sonic drive-thru. The byplay is laugh-out-loud funny yet somehow natural, even though it is 100% about product features.

DIAMOND EMERALD NUTS

Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, San Francisco.



Around midafternoon, in a work world of soul-sucking cubicles, everybody gets a little woozy. Fatigue plus boredom plus the depletion of the post-lunch blood-sugar spike equals Snack Emergency. The message here: Eat our nuts to stave off drowsiness or else Robert Goulet will sneak into your cube and mess your stuff up. And there he is, on tiptoe, committing office vandalism! Hilarious, God rest his soul.

NATIONWIDE INSURANCE

TM, Dallas



“Life Comes at You Fast,” this company has been saying for a while, so be prepared. But finally the right gimmick: to use somebody who actually has been blindsided by misfortune. Kevin Federline, the ex-Mr. Britney Spears, sportingly permits himself to be portrayed as fast-food deep-fryer fantasizing about a solo rap career.

CALIFORNIA HORSE TRACK ASSOCIATION

Rubin Postaer Associates, Santa Monica, Calif.



What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. So says the most popular tourism campaign ever. But what if it isn’t true? That’s what the California racing establishment wonders aloud in a campaign to persuade Californians to squander their money at home—lest Vegas indiscretions (some named “Misty”) come home to roost.

LA-Z-BOY

RPA, Santa Monica, Calif.



It’s not called Varie-T-Boy. It’s not called Val-U-Boy. Anyone entering a La-Z-Boy furniture gallery is looking, first and foremost, to get La-Zied. It’s all about the comfort, as three odd and very funny TV spots (and one odd and very unfunny TV spot) make abundantly clear. Also abundantly enticing.

THE BOBBY AWARDS

BY BOB GARFIELD
bgarfield@adage.com

All right, we surrender.

In the earliest days of the Bobby Awards, nominations occasionally drew from a quaint subcategory called “drama.” That’s a kind of storytelling, now extinct, that aims to stir the mind or the soul without someone dressing up like a duck. For more than two decades, we have struggled to keep the flickering flame of drama alive. In vain. We must now finally face the facts: The Bobby Awards are the best-performance-in-a-comedy awards. So be it.

The bad news is TV advertising is deprived of a powerful means of engaging viewers. The good news: The comedy is sometimes very, very good, yielding no shortage of star turns. This is the Book of Tens, so start counting.

BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN ACTRESS

This was the year’s best category, because each of the nominees is a master of the 105%, that slight exaggeration of character—one click past verisimilitude—that discovers comic familiarity without venturing into cartoonishness.

In the Diet Coke spot titled “Backlot” (Wieden & Kennedy, Portland, Ore.), **Amy French** is a production assistant in the head-set, caught in the middle of a diva actress’ power struggle with a director. She portrays just the right combination of deference to the bigwigs and utter contempt for everyone else. When she says, “Well, then go to stage 29 ... now!” we suspend disbelief.

For Ikea Canada (Zig, Toronto), **Lisa Horner** glances at her receipt as she leaves checkout. She starts to hurry out of the store—because prices are so low she thinks she’s been undercharged. Her semi-controlled dash is hilarious—but not as hilarious as her shouting at her husband: “Start the car! Start the car! START THE CAR!!!”

Orliah Cassidy is an exasperated mom for AT&T Wireless (BBDO, New York), confronting her daughter about texting bills. The kid responds all in text shorthand, and Cassidy is left adorably tongue-tied.

This year’s Bobby, however, goes to **Molly Erdman**, who is wife to hubby Brian in dozens of improvised Sonic spots (Barkley, Kansas City, Mo.). Her job is to regard him, lovingly, in utter contempt. You know, like a wife. Perfection.

BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN ACTOR

This is a most belated recognition of the Sonic ensemble, who have been doing this stuff for four years. **Brian (“Brian”) Huskey**, **Peter Grosz** and **T.J. Jagodowski** are all so hilariously deadpan in their drive-through vignettes it’s impossible to choose a favorite. So they share the trophy (duplicates are \$119 apiece).

BEST PERFORMANCE BY A CELEBRITY

We must begin with sexy **Kate Walsh**, in her sexy Cadillac spot (Modernista, Boston). Actually, the only thing comical about this is the fantasy it engenders with Bobby Awards jury. As if.

Now we pause to recognize a talent who will not receive a Bobby but who walks away as “Mr. Congeniality.” Applause, please, for **Kevin Federline**, who let Nationwide insurance (TM Advertising, Dallas) mock his odyssey from obscurity to celebrity and back. Yes, life comes at you fast.

Alias, so does death. A posthumous Bobby goes to **Robert Goulet**. In his Super Bowl spot for Diamond Emerald Nuts (Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, San Francisco) he played himself as a 3 p.m. cubicle pixie, messing up peoples’ stuff as their blood sugar headed downward. From Lancelot to Prancealot, God rest his soul.